I:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

During the festival of Kētrappa at Benglor the Poleyas may not be seen by any high caste villager till the eighteenth day of the festival, but on the eighteenth evening they march in procession with pipe and drum to the Kētrappa temple and watch the ritual from a nearby knoll. They bring offerings of fowls to Kētrappa, and the birds are decapitated by Mēdas, who have an important part in the festival. The Kētrappa festival seems to be an extreme instance of the exclusion of Poleyas. In the festivals of other village-deities they participate to a greater extent, though on a different level from the rest.

Every village has an hereditary headman called *takka*. It is the headman's duty to see that the village greens (*mandus*) where dances and dinners are held, and the village assembly meets, are kept in good condition. He has to ensure that the bridges and ferries in the village are in constant repair and that the village tank is clean. He has to look after pilgrims and travellers passing through the village.

Coorgs have a keen appreciation of leadership and precedence. From their folklore it appears as though they are incapable of conceiving of any group, of no matter what, without a leader. The epithet consistently applied to a headman is '*mūpayanda*' which means 'precedence-having'. A sense of precedence and respect for seniority helped to introduce order into their meetings, just as a respect for precedents produced a consistent body of decisions on any particular matter.

Formerly a headman wielded great influence in his village (or *nāḍ*), and a good headman was a powerful factor for stability. If the headman was a bad man, the entire village was ruined: as a proverb has it, 'when the *takka* is a loafer the entire village is like the area inhabited by Untouchables'. In the management of village affairs and the settlement of village disputes the headman was assisted by an assembly consisting of the representatives of the various *okkas* in the village. The assembly was called *kūṭa*, which means a 'gathering' or 'group'. It met on one of the several greens in the village. There were separate village greens for transacting business (*panchāyati mandu*), for dancing at the harvest festival (*ūr mandu*), a third for dancing at the festival of the village-deity (*dēvara mandu*), and so on. Sometimes there was a roofed enclosure (*ambala*) on the green, which provided shelter from rain and sun for the assembly to meet, and for women to watch the dances.

The village-assemblies were far more powerful in the past than

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CHAPTER XI

AMMA COORG

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[162] THE Amma Coorgs belong to the indigenous priesthood of Coorg. They
[776] numbered 666 in the Census of 1931, 336 being males and 330 females. Their common name is Amma Kodagas, which would naturally signify Coorgs devoted to the worship of Amma or the goddess of the chief river of the
173 country, the Cauvery. The Brahmans invented a mythical origin which is not in accord with the Cauvery Purana.

As reward for his austerities the sage Kavera was blessed with a daughter, Kaveri, who was proposed to be given in marriage to Agastya, another sage who resided on the Brahmagiris. Kaveri did not accept the proposal. She assumed the shape of a river and fled from the mountain. Agastya in hot pursuit overtook her at Kadianad and persuaded her to submit their dispute to the arbitration of their friends. They called three families of Amma Kodagas and six of Coorgs. The former sided with Agastya and the latter with Kaveri. The Amma Kodagas decided that Kaveri should not be allowed to go. The Coorgs said that a woman should not be forced to marry against her will. This provoked Agastya, who pronounced a curse that the generation of Coorgs should become less, that their women should not tie their garments in front, that the sown rice should not grow, and that their cows should not give milk. But Kaveri Amma who was the patroness of the Coorgs counteracted the curse as well as she could, and said, "The Coorgs shall increase, but the Amma Coorgs decrease, the Coorg women shall tie their garments behind; the sown paddy shall be transplanted, the cows shall be milked after the calves have drunk". So saying, she tried to escape and on being held by Agastya by the border of her garment, she turned to the right and flowed rapidly away. Hence the place where this occurred is called Balamuri (turning to the right). A linga was erected at the spot by the Brahmans. It is yearly visited in the month of *November* at the time of the Kaveri feast by Coorgs and others, who bathe in the river. Dodda Vira Rajendrar built here a rest-house, which, though built a century ago, is in tolerable preservation. Nothing more is known about the real history of the Amma Coorgs, but a few facts may be given as evidence that they are the remains of an ancient priesthood.

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[796] The Amma Coorgs observe in common with the Coorgs the great festivals of the country, and act as priests. They dress like Coorgs and at the same time wear the holy thread. It seems that they inclined towards the

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

632 361 [485] Frank Vardon, the intrepid companion of Dr. Livingstone in South-Africa. He died on the 21st June 1860. At the junction of the three Ghat-roads rises the *Roman Catholic Church of St. Michael*, renovated a few years ago. Further on to the left of the Fraserpet road is a prettily designed, but badly executed long row of buildings, destined for native shops and Abkari-godowns; behind it, in modest retreat, stands the *Civil Dispensary*, and on the opposite side of the road on a beautiful spot the *Travellers' Bangalow*, where, though comforts may be wanting, a splendid view is ever present! Still further on near the first mile-stone is the site of the *Offices of the Public Works Department*. Dotted here and there, ensconced in wooded nooks or standing forth on knolls, boldly facing the monsoon storms, but commanding [205] glorious views, the European houses are placed. In front [697] of the Superintendent's Kacheri is the *Post-Office* and the *Jail-garden*, and below it the dome of the *Onkáréswara-temple* with its gilt orb peeps out from a hollow round which the dwellings of the Coorg officials and of Brahmins are clustered amid a dense mass of vegetation. Some of these houses are two [206] storied and after European pattern. On the northside of the fort on a lower terrace stands the *Telegraph Office*, a building of the Rájahs' time which, after the successive metamorphosis into an elephant-stable, travellers' bangalow and school-house, attained its present destination in 1867. At a little distance and separated from it by a narrow rice valley crossed by a broad bund, stretches the native town, called *Mádapet* or *Mahádévpet* in honour of Mahádévamma, the favourite Ráni of Dodda-Vírájender. It consists of three streets, two of which are nearly parallel and the third branches off to the left at the beginning of the town, leading to the Sappers' lines. An addition to the Petta was attempted six years ago by allotting a new piece of ground for dwellings, but the scheme has not made much progress since. The new portion was

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

flourishing town, 20 miles from Mercara, on the Cannanore high-road and four miles from its junction at Perambádi with the Mysore road. It is a place of some importance on account of its coffee, rice and cardamom traffic with the Western Coast. The population amounts to 3024 souls, of whom 1,255 are Mussulmans, 1296 Hindus, 156 Jains and 313 Roman Catholic Christians, who settled here as fugitives from Tippu Sultan's conquered dominions. The town was established in 1792 by Dodda-Vírájender in commemoration of a meeting that took place between himself and General Abercromby during the first campaign against Mysore in 1791.

The town proved very unhealthy, but since the rigorous introduction of sanitary measures by Lieut. Mackenzie, generously supported by a Native Municipal Board, the health of the people has greatly improved. Vírájpet is prettily situated at the foot of the Maletambira hill on the top of which there is a large square-built temple. The town may be divided into the Roman Catholic quarter, the main bazaar and the Mussulman streets. Every Wednesday there is market, which attracts a great concourse of Coorgs. The merchandise is similar to that at Mercara. Of public buildings the most attractive is the renovated *Roman Catholic Church*, which Father Guillon reconstructed in simple gothic style and with a copper roof. The inside is gaudily ornamented with paintings and statues in stucco, his handywork, greatly to the taste and admiration of the natives. The *New Offices* of the Assistant Superintendent, the Taluq and Nád-Subadar's Kacheri behind the Traveller's Bangalow and above the town, promise to be an imposing and convenient structure, when completed. The *Traveller's Bangalow* surrounded by a high wall, is well situated on a knoll, which forms the highest point of the town. It was built of the material and on the site of the Rájah's palace, but without much regard to the convenience of European visitors who frequent the place. The

4: Richter M, G-3 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

and when offered, do not exert themselves to retain the boon. However, their wants are not overlooked, a new school will shortly be re-established in Gadinád. These people, who with the exception of the inhabitants of Surlabi-Muttunád behaved badly towards the English Government in 1837, are much under the influence of the Jangams residing in these Náds. There are two Mathas of note here, Mádapur and Abbi-matha, where the Shivácháries possess rich endowments.

The Kanavé-Hoblis are inhabited by a set of people identical with that of the adjoining Mysore ryots. They are chiefly cultivators of dry land and produce horse-gram, rági, various kinds of beans, tobacco, bangh, flax, sesamum and also cotton. The sandalwood tree grows extensively in this taluq. In Yedavanád some rice-fields which have a good water-supply yield two crops; there the wild sago-palm is also carefully attended to for the sake of the toddy drawn from it and for the farinaceous substance, prepared for food by the poorer classes from the inner part of the tree. Honey of the best quality is largely collected in June and much appreciated by the people. Near the village Beradi-kanavé there was the Back-stokade from which the northern column of the Coorg field-force was repulsed in 1834. (Bakka, *Kg.* door-way to a narrow passage.)

Fraserpet is the seat of the taluq and Nád-Kacheri of Nanjaráj patna and the monsoon Head-quarters of the Superintendent. It lies 20 miles to the east from Mercara on an elevation of 3,100 feet above the sea. Situated on the left bank of the river Kávéri in a bent formed by a sudden turn of the river, opposite the Mysore frontier, with which it is connected by a fine stone bridge, and the country, though open, being dotted by rounded grass or wood-clad hillocks on which the European houses are built, Fraserpet offers a most varied and pleasing landscape, especially from the travellers' bangalow, which occupies a rocky eminence, the site

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

632 of the former fort. It was a happy thought to select this
[485] spot for a travellers' bangalow, where after a weary journey over the monotonous Mysore-roads the traveller is placed in the midst of a charming scenery, a worthy introduction into Coorg!

[132] From the position of Fraserpet its climate is hotter than that of Mercara, but during the monsoon it is extremely pleasant, as very little rain falls there and the heat of the sun is moderated by constant clouds and light fogs. The nights are cool and pleasant, nor is the sun ever very oppressive at any season, except for an hour or two at midday; after the monsoon, however, and especially after considerable inundations by the Kávéri, the place becomes feverish and is not inhabited by Europeans.

The town was named "Fraserpet" in honor of General
[162] Fraser, the first Commissioner of Coorg. It contains now
[361] 326 houses, mostly tiled, and a population of 1,213 souls, of whom 360 are Christians, 388 Mussulmans and 465 Hindus.
[368] The town can boast of a Roman Catholic Church, a newly built shrine, dedicated to Ganapati, with a very useful public well in front of it, an Anglo-Vernacular School, a native rest-house with a tank and a Government wood-yard, besides the
[795] European bangalows. The Roman Catholics are mostly native or East Indian pensioned soldiers and their families, a detachment of Sappers and Miners having been stationed there when employed in making the great road to Mercara and the bridge over the Kávéri.

Sómanápet in Yedavanád is 26¼ miles to the north of
[131] Mercara and of the same elevation. It lies on the highroad
[362] to Manjerabad, but there is nothing remarkable connected
[162] with the Petta. Of its 197 houses 19 are tiled and 178
[241] thatched. Of the 953 inhabitants 862 are Hindus and 91
[437] Mussulmans. There are but few cultivators, most of them live on trade in various articles. Though fully alive to their

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

Though fully alive to their material interests, the town-people have little desire for or perhaps little faith in education after European fashion. They seem to be quite content with the knowledge of their bazaar-routine. Every Monday there is market, hence the name of the place. (Sómawára=Monday.)

The place is greatly in want of a travellers' bangalow, for which a beautiful site could be obtained near the lodge of the road-overseer. The country about Sómawárpet is very picturesque, especially towards Shanthally, the Mukribetta with a flourishing coffee-plantation at its foot, and the rocks that enclose the Honammana tank. vide p. 15. On the summit of these rocks "Cairns" in excellent preservation have lately been found.

Yélusávirashíme-taluq occupies the northermost part of Coorg. It is a narrow strip of land, about 22 miles in length and 4 in width. Its total area comprises only 91 square miles; yet it contains in its three Hoblis, 168 villages and a population of 17,766 souls, of whom 17,623 are Hindus, 41 Mussulmans, and 98 Native Christians. There are no Coorgs in this taluq; the inhabitants are of the same class as the agricultural population in the adjoining taluq of Hassan. There is a striking contrast between the ryots of Yélusávirashíme and those of Central Coorg. Whilst the latter are well and warmly dressed, comfortably housed and abundantly fed, the former appear very poor and miserable, covered as they are only with a black coarse camlet. They are timid, credulous and submissive to the authority of the Patéls, who find them patient sheep for fleecing, but the Patéls with their connexions are noted as exceedingly litigious amongst themselves and rather troublesome to the Government in times past. The country was wrested from Mysore by the Coorg Rájah, Dodda-Vírappa, who died in 1736, and partakes of the natural features of the Manjarabad district. It is hilly, and some mountains, as the Málimbi and the Uru-uduvé (village-jungles)

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

Coorg is crossed by two trunk-roads from east to west and from north to south, intersecting each other at Mercara, and by a branch-road near Vírájpet the western and eastern highroads are connected.

Previous to the occupation of the country by the British in 1834, the roads were in a primitive state, wholly impracticable for wheeled carriges and scarcely less so for bullocks, it having been part of the policy of the Rájahs, to render their country as little accessible as possible, from an idea common to the mountaineers in all parts of the world, that the chance of invasion and conquest was thereby diminished. For the same reason some of the more direct and practicable lines, leading to Mercara were shut up and travelling by them prohibited.

The *Eastern trunk-road* from Mysore enters Coorg at Frasерpet, where it crosses the Kávéri, which is spanned by a fine masonry bridge of 7 arches and 516 feet in length. The part of the line between Frasерpet and Mercara is 19¼ miles in length and was commenced in January 1835 and completed in 1837 by a detachment of Sappers under Capt. Underwood, Lieuts. Rundall, Doria and Fast. The Kávéri-bridge, however, was built in 1846-48 by Capt. Ch. J. Green with the material of the dismantled Fort at Frasерpet. It bears the inscription: "The Most Noble George Marquis of Tweeddale, Governor of Madras, Major-General Mark Cubbon Commissioner of Mysore. Frasерpet Bridge. The first stone of this bridge was laid on the 1st day of January 1846 by Capt. W. G. Onslow, Superintendent of Coorg and it was opened to public traffic on the 12th day of May 1848. Charles James Green, Capt. in the Madras Engineers, Architect."

To break the distance of 19¼ miles, there is a Traveller's Bangalow at Suntikoppa, 9 miles from Mercara. The elevated situation is pretty, but the present condition of the Bangalow wretched.

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

The upper portion of this road near Mercara has in several places too steep a gradient and should, as the Chief Engineer proposes, be reconstructed. The *Sampáji-Ghat* or the line from Mercara towards Mangalore, which, however, ought to be called "*Fast's Ghat*" in honor to the professional skill of the young Engineer Officer who planned and executed this great work and who fell a victim to jungle-fever, was commenced after the monsoon in 1837 and offered considerable engineering difficulties, as it followed for many a mile through dense jungle. It is for the most part very direct; the soil is generally good and, except in two places, so gentle is the slope down the Ghat of 19¼ miles in length, that for bandy traffic it offers no difficulty. Between the 9th and 10th miles only the gradient for a very short distance is as much as 1 in 12 and 1 in 6 or 7. The total fall in the first 15 miles of this Ghat is about 2900 feet, which gives 1 in 37 for the whole line. From the foot of the Ghat to Sampáji, 4¼ miles, the fall is only 55 feet. The cost of cutting out the roadway of these 19¼ miles, including the removal of rocks, trees, etc. but without bridges amounted to about 3500 Rs. per mile, exclusive of the pay of the Sappers and cost of tools. Whithin a short time the cost of the road was more than covered by the increase of the Salt Revenue on the coast, whilst the easy access to a market gave stimulus to the agriculture of Coorg and with the advent of coffee-planters, whose extensive estates line both sides of the road, its importance became invaluable.

The stages on this road from Mercara are: 6 miles to Madyanád, 14 to Sampáji, 13¼ to Sulya, 11 to Káu, 10¼ to Puttúr, 15 to Pánemangalore, 7 to Feringapet and 9 to Mangalore with a Traveller's Bangalow at each stage and all in healthy localities except that at Sampáji.

The road from Cannanore into Coorg through the Periambády Ghat and the Anachaukur road were finished some twelve years later, chiefly for military purposes. The line

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

491 from Vírájpet to Mercara was made shortly afterwards. A continuation of this line to the north of Coorg from Mercara to Kodlipet was commenced in 1862 and opened for traffic in 1868.

491 485 Considering the *Cannanore-road*, its first 2¼ miles leading out of Mercara are excessively severe, in several places the gradients being 1 in 9. The total fall in this descent of 2¼ miles is about 550 feet, giving 1 in 24 over all. Beyond the 7th mile a high arched bridge leads over the Muttaremutha and between the 9th and 10th miles the well situated, clean and comfortable Bangalow at Murnád invites the traveller. Beyond the 12th mile the river Kávéri is crossed by a ferry and thence to Vírájpet, the road is pretty level and throughout in excellent condition. Four miles from Vírájpet the Periambády Ghat commences which was laid out by Capt. Francis and is down to Urti about 10 miles in length with a fall of 2682 feet. From the head of the Ghat, which is 3141 above the sea level, the descent varies from 1 in 18 and 20 to 1 in 30, but two miles from the head to the Wottekolli public bangalow, a distance of three quarters of a mile, there is a distressing gradient of 1 in 10 and 12. The road after this is easy and level in places to beyond the fourth mile from which it drops down to Urti—6 miles from Wottekolli—with generally far too steep a gradient. On the Coorg frontier the Kalla-hole, a mountain torrent coming down from the western slope of the Ghats, is to be crossed by a good bridge. Urti is 38 miles from Cannanore and 459 feet above the sea. There is no public bangalow, but a pretty one at Gunot, 7 miles further on near the united Kalla-hole (stony-river) and Bara-pole which river flows at a little distance behind the bangalow and offers attractive sport to the lover of the "gentle art." As to a journey down the Ghat, it is replete with ever varying charms, reminding the tourist of the finest mountain scenery of Scotland, Wales or the Black Forest in Baden. And

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

such glorious forest trees of Poon, Sampige, Red Cedar Anjili, Hone, etc.! To see them and travel under their shade is worth a long journey. From Gunot to Cannanore or Tellicherry the road runs level and affords easy travelling. Near Ulil or Chávachári, 22 miles from Cannanore, a large wooden bridge resting on high stone pillars crosses the Gunot-river, but a public bangalow is only found at Shalot, 12¼ miles from Cannanore.

At the head of the Periambády Ghat a highroad branches off into Mysore by way of Bittangala 5 miles, Hattúr 3 miles, Tittimatti 9 miles, Anechaukur 4 miles, Panchally 6 miles, Honasur 11¼ miles, 4 miles from which place it meets the Mysore-Fraserpet road. Except between Anechaukur and Tittimatti the road is easy and generally in good condition, and since the Gonikoppa-bridge near Hattúr has been finished, at the sacrifice of the life of Mr. R. Hunter, a most promising Engineer Officer, there is no difficulty for wheeled carriages from Mysore to Cannanore, a distance of 113 miles. The public bangalows on this line are excellent in the Mysore country, but very indifferent in Coorg and Malabar.

To cut off two sides of a triangle a branch road, 3 miles long, has been constructed from Vírájpet to Bittangala for the Mysore cart-traffic. It is hoped, that the Mysore railway may yet extend to the eastern frontier of Coorg!

The *Northern highroad*, lately constructed by Mr. Stoddard, connects Mercara with Manjerabad by way of Sómawárpet and Kodlipet, 44¼ miles to the latter town. The line having been laid out under stringent regulations in regard to gradient, and the trace receiving great attention by Capt. W. Campbell, the result is a road with uniformly the easiest gradients in the Province. Most of the roadway is 18 feet wide. The smaller streams are all bridged over; for the Choran-hole a three-arched masonry bridge of 65 feet is proposed; for the Mattapúr a single-arched, and for the Hatte-hole a three-

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

491 485 arched bridge. For the present these rivers are crossed in the dry season by rough stone causeways, but during the monsoon no carts can pass. There is no public bangalow on this line. During the last few years avenue trees at regular distances have been planted by the ryots along these high-roads and future generations will enjoy the benefit of this benevolent measure.

A line of equal importance, but unfinished though practicable for carts, is Col. Stuart's (vide p. 339) road from Vírájpet into Mysore by way of Anandapur and Siddápur, whence a branch, traced by Messrs. Stoddard and Gramatzki and opened out by Mr. J. Hunt, leads on the right bank of the Kávéri to Fraserpet. To avoid the steep Mercara ghat-roads for the through-traffic from Mysore to Mangalore, a new trace has been cut by Lieut. Clarke and Mr. Gramatzki to connect the Periapatna-Siddápur road with the Sampáji-ghat-road, placing in its line the iron girder bridge which is to span the Kávéri; but under the present financial difficulties the scheme has been postponed; likewise the opening up of a cart-road through Kiggatnád into Wynád, the trace of which only has been cut by the same engineers. Roads proposed are those from Bhágamandala to Sulya, from Bhágamandala to Nálkanád and Vírájpet and Bhágamandala to Mercara. The Rájah's road from Mercara to Nálkanád is still in use, but it is impracticable for carts. Here and there it is still lined with stately avenue trees.

In addition to the roads, designed and carried out from Imperial funds, others have been constructed by planters from private sources without any Government assistance, so that, for pack-bullocks at least, the country is opened up in every direction, but for the increasing traffic better means of communication are required and the proposed roads would supply every want.